

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Canceled)
2. (Previously Presented) An assembly for stiffening a flexible member, the assembly comprising:
 - a stiffening member extending over a portion of the flexible member;
 - an adapter secured to the stiffening member and extending over another portion of the flexible member in a spaced relation thereto to form an annulus;
 - an insert disposed in the annulus; and
 - a ring connected to an end of the stiffening member, and wherein an end of the adapter is secured to the stiffening member by a weldment extending between the adapter and the ring.
3. (Original) The assembly of claim 2 wherein the insert is secured to the adapter and to the ring.
4. (Original) The assembly of claim 3 wherein the insert is secured to the adapter and to the ring by a weldment extending between the insert and the adapter, and by a weldment extending between the insert and the ring.
5. (Currently Amended) The assembly of claim ~~1~~ 2 wherein the insert is secured to the adapter.
6. (Previously Presented) An assembly for stiffening a flexible member, the assembly comprising:
 - a stiffening member extending over a portion of the flexible member;
 - an adapter secured to the stiffening member and extending over another portion of the flexible member in a spaced relation thereto to form an annulus; and
 - an insert disposed in the annulus, wherein the insert is secured to the adapter;
 - wherein the insert is secured to the adapter by a weldment extending between the insert and the adapter.